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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0313
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RHEFDHP/DIA DHP-1 WASHINGTON DC
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: THESSALONIKI: COMMUNISTS DEMONSTRATE OVER KOSOVO; RIGHTISTS
PROTEST MACEDONIA NAME ISSUE

11. SUMMARY: On February 22, 2008 two separate demonstrations took place in downtown Thessaloniki to protest the recent unilateral declaration of independence in Kosovo in one case, and the Nimitz proposal for resolution of the Macedonia name issue in the second. The demonstrations were peaceful, and no security incidents or injuries were reported. END SUMMARY

COMMUNIST DEMONSTRATORS BURN AMERICAN FLAG OUTSIDE CONSULATE
GENERAL

12. At 19:30, approximately 700 demonstrators, including members of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) gathered at Aristotle Square (plans for the demonstration had been announced in advance) and marched through the main streets of the city holding red flags, and lighted candles. Some, accompanied by demonstrators wearing skeleton costumes, carried an effigy of a girl on a cross labeled "The Balkans." They were led by Thessaloniki Communist Party Secretary Kostas Avramopoulos who noted that both the New

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Democracy and PASOK parties shared responsibility for the bad situation in the Balkans and demanded that the Government of Greece not recognize Kosovo. The demonstrators first stopped in front of the French Consulate, then in front of the German Consulate and finally stopped for five minutes in front of the building housing the American Consulate General. They shouted anti-American slogans (e.g. "Americans, Killers of the People, Go home," "People are not terrorists but the Americans are," "Sixty years NATO, the same story, violence, wars and terrorism.") They burned an American flag and spray painted on the pavement in front of the main entrance of the building, "Americans, Killers of the People," with a signature of KKE. Then they departed and proceeded to the Serbian Consulate and the British Council from which they dispersed peacefully.

RIGHTISTS PROTEST MACEDONIA NAME ISSUE PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

13. In a separate demonstration at 20:30, 50 members of the extreme rightist group "Golden Dawn" gathered at Aristotle Square, on Tsimiski Street, 50 meters from the American Consulate General building. They remained there for one hour holding Greek flags and shouting slogans against Greek politicians, the Nimitz proposal, the Republic of Macedonia, and against the United States (e.g. "Americans and friends of Skopje should realize that Macedonia is Greek," "No to NATO and America." Then they left the area peacefully.

POLICE WERE WELL PREPARED AND EFFECTIVE

14. COMMENT: The US Consulate General is located on the 7th floor of a commercial building which also houses the Albanian Consulate and the Consular/Commercial/Economic Affairs office of the Republic of Macedonia. During the demonstration the police were well prepared and protected the Consulate building effectively. Four police divisions were deployed around the building and two police buses with a fire brigade closed off the road in back of the Consulate. Local TV crews covered the events. Northern Greek citizens and political leaders feel strongly about the Macedonia name issue and often urge their government to take a hard line on the issue but this is the first time that their strongly held feelings have manifested themselves in a demonstration. END COMMENT

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